

Washington, DC— Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) voted to restore accountability to federal spending and dedicate government resources to programs that most effectively deal with the country's challenges. — The 2009 Budget Conference Agreement, which passed the House by a 214-210 margin, would balance the budget and create a surplus in 2012 and 2013

“We are setting the right priorities for this country through a pay-as-you-go system that reduces wasteful spending and focuses on making a better quality of life for all Americans,” said Sestak. “This resolution recognizes that the only way to address our national security is to improve our defense, health, education, economic, and energy and environmental securities.”

Sestak said one of the clearest examples of a way Congress can cut spending while improving policy is demonstrated by the healthcare components of this resolution. The conference calls for research to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of different health care treatments and procedures to increase the efficiency of health services. At the same time, the legislation accommodates up to \$50 billion to cover millions of uninsured children, and rejects the Administration's proposed cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, totaling \$479 billion and \$94 billion respectively.

After reprioritizing federal spending, the conference agreement necessitates only a 2.9 percent growth in revenues from the levels assumed in the President's budget. To cover this increase, the resolution proposes not to raise taxes, but to address offshore tax havens and to close the tax gap, in part by directing \$490 million to the Internal Revenue Service for enforcement.

In addition to working on health spending, the conference has produced plans to adjust the focus of defense, education, economic, and energy spending:

- **Defense:** This agreement improves America's defense security by giving more funding to nuclear nonproliferation programs and by rejecting the President's cuts to first responders by restoring funding for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program and firefighter assistance grants. Critically, the legislation also shows support for the men and women fighting abroad by increasing spending on Veterans by \$3.7 billion.

- **Education:** The resolution recognizes the need to significantly increase financial support of education programs to give children the necessary resources to learn and the qualified teachers to instruct them. Education is not appropriately funded when more than ten percent of students are dropping out before their high school class graduates and 15-year-old Americans have lower math skills than 80 percent of other industrialized nations.

New funding can support the 47 education programs, from Arts in Education to Mental Health Integration, President has proposed to eliminate, but that the conference specifically supports. In addition, the agreement passed by the House allows for funding to make college more affordable by raising the maximum Pell grant and maintaining Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and Perkins Loans.

- **Economic:** This legislation gives needed assistance to working, middle-class families who are struggling with skyrocketing energy, food and health care costs. Under a pay-as-you-go system, the agreement includes relief from the Alternative Minimum Tax, relief from the marriage penalty and an extension of the ten percent individual income tax rate, all paid for by House reserve funds. By strengthening safety net programs, such as home heating assistance (LIHEAP) and the Social Services Block Grant, this resolution helps individuals who struggle the most.

Furthermore, more jobs will be created through investments in infrastructure, such as highway and water projects.

- **Energy and Environment:** The agreement takes steps toward reducing America's dependence on foreign oil by providing \$7.7 billion in funding for renewable energy, energy efficiency and other energy programs. Part of this investment is to produce "green collar" jobs in businesses and industries by paving the way for legislation that will facilitate the training of workers in these industries.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from

Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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